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Field visits

Report of the field visit by members of the Executive Board of UNDP and UNFPA to Fiji and Samoa, 22-29 April 2014

I. Introduction

1. A delegation representing the Executive Board visited Fiji and Samoa from 22 April to 29 April 2014. It was led by the President of the Executive Board (the Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations) and included the Permanent Representatives of Tanzania and Montenegro, the Deputy Permanent Representatives of Ethiopia and Nepal and delegates from the Missions of Australia, Guatemala, Ireland and the Russian Federation to the United Nations.

2. The purpose of the visit, the first to the Pacific Islands region, was to enhance the Board's understanding of how the United Nations organizations, in particular UNDP and UNFPA, position their engagement with the Pacific small island developing States (PSIDS). The visit was timely, given the upcoming Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, scheduled to be held in Apia, Samoa, from 1 September to 4 September 2014.

3. The delegation would like to thank the Governments of Fiji and Samoa for the opportunities provided to hold a substantive dialogue on key issues with senior members of both Governments.

4. The delegation would also like to record its thanks to the teams of UNDP and UNFPA in both countries for the well prepared and organized visit, the valuable insights they provided into their work and the ready availability of staff throughout the visit.

5. The President of the Executive Board wishes to have it recorded in this respect that he deeply appreciated the high level of commitment to the purpose of the field visit by all members of the Board delegation.

6. The programme consisted of visits to the UNDP Multi-Country Office (MCO), the UNDP Pacific Centre and the UNFPA Regional Office in Suva, Fiji, and to the UNDP MCO in Apia, Samoa. These offices serve 14 of the Pacific Island countries and territories.

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7. Site visits took place to UNDP and UNFPA projects in both countries. The delegation would like to thank everyone involved who invested their time and effort to host what was an essential part of the visit: a close observation of dynamic partnerships.

8. Meetings were held with senior Government representatives of both countries and their implementing partners, and with representatives of Tonga and the territory of Tokelau. A conference call was held with the Joint Presence Office in the Solomon Islands. A press conference took place at the commencement of the visit in Suva, Fiji, and at the Prime Minister's reception in Apia, Samoa.

9. The delegation acknowledges that it was not feasible to visit most of the countries that the MCOs serve, as they are remote and costly to reach. Nevertheless, through the briefings, the members of the delegation got a good grasp of the unique challenges for UNDP and UNFPA in their work in those countries, as well as the added difficulty for the two Resident Coordinators to manage United Nations coordination in a multi-country context.

10. This report sets out briefly some important aspects of development context, summarizes the delegation's findings on the three main issues it decided to focus on: (a) United Nations presence in the region; (b) climate change and the environment (mostly UNDP); and (c) violence against women (mostly UNFPA). The report concludes with several observations.

II. Development context

High levels of vulnerability

11. Unique programming challenges are presented in a region with a population of 2.5 million living in an environment ranging from vulnerable to extremely vulnerable in 14 countries scattered over 30 million square kilometres of the Pacific Ocean.

12. Vulnerability to the environment, especially to the effects of climate change, poses fundamental challenges to sustainable development in a highly disaster-prone region, with wide diversity in culture and in governance and population structures and with low human and institutional capacity.

13. Vulnerability causes human suffering, threatens livelihoods, frustrates development efforts and reverses development gains. The delegation was briefed by the UNDP Solomon Islands Deputy Resident Representative on the devastating effect of recent floods that had seriously damaged the capital city, Honiara.

14. Because of the vulnerability to natural disasters and a limited adaptive capacity, the PSIDS need to view climate change and disaster risk reduction in an integrated manner.

15. These enormous logistical challenges, due to great distances between islands, result in exceptionally high costs of carrying out business in a sustainable manner. This presents significant challenges, not only to Governments, but also to development partners, including the United Nations, in providing humanitarian and development assistance.

Some Millennium Development Goals off track

16. Some of the Pacific Island countries and territories are among the poorest and most vulnerable segments of the international community, with Kiribati, the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu currently classified as among the least developed countries. Most of them appear as part of the 'medium human development' category of the Human Development Report. The Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, the Solomon Islands and Tonga saw their ranking decline in the 2013 Human Development Index over the previous year.

17. A concerted effort is required to accelerate and sustain progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. A majority of the PSIDS are off track in achieving the Goals on poverty, environmental sustainability and gender equality. Good progress has been made in reducing child mortality, achieving universal education and improving maternal health.

18. Although the United Nations clearly prioritizes the least developed countries in the region, efforts to tackle inequality within countries are more difficult, with remoteness of access among the main reasons for these challenges.

Rising inequality

19. Inequality is rising in the Pacific Island region, and is reaching alarming levels in some countries. Multi-dimensional poverty is significantly higher than income poverty, particularly in rural areas and remote islands, due to weak local governance and, consequently, the lack of capacity to deliver basic services, such as water and sanitation. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable; they are usually overrepresented among the poor.

20. Economic poverty reduction policies have focused on market liberalization and job creation, with less attention paid to protecting the vulnerable or reducing existing inequalities. Poverty reduction through pro-growth measures and job creation is necessary but not enough. Small populations, remoteness and vulnerability to natural disasters hinder the region's ability to generate and sustain economic growth in the long run.

Periods of instability and conflict

21. The region has suffered from periods of instability and conflict, and continues to grapple with governance challenges. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) notes that while a long tradition of peace and stability characterizes the region, there is an increasing incidence of social and ethno-religious tensions and conflict as well as crime and violence.

22. The UNDAF further states that while there is a greater commitment to strengthening parliamentary representation, governance institutions and frameworks do not effectively voice the concerns of all citizens. Legislative oversight is weak, as are legal frameworks and mechanisms for human rights protections; corruption continues to be a major challenge.

23. The 2013 Pacific Regional MDGs Tracking Report showed that progress in the region has been slow and uneven in advancing gender equality; many major gender disparities persist.

Ending violence against women and political momentum

24. The most alarming, and indeed life-threatening, manifestation of gender inequality and discrimination in the PSIDS is violence directed against women and girls. There is now high-quality, comprehensive and internationally comparable data, which presents irrefutable and alarming evidence of the high prevalence and severity of violence against women and girls, both by intimate partners and by strangers.

25. According to recent population-based surveys, approximately two out of three women in the Pacific Islands region reported having experienced physical and or sexual violence, often from their spouse and partner, during their life; this is very high by world standards.

26. Considerable evidence exists that violence against women is worse in rural areas (80 per cent live in rural areas or on remote islands) or in situations of urban overcrowding, or during conflict, instability and natural disasters. This is a clear indication that gender inequality seriously inhibits not only rights and freedoms but also sustainable and equitable development.

27. Unprecedented political commitment and momentum exists across the region to promote gender equality and end violence against women. At their meetings in 2011 and again in 2012, the Pacific Island Forum Leaders called for measures to address this issue.

III. United Nations presence

Finding 1: The UNDAF is well aligned with national and regional priorities

28. The United Nations organizations are guided by a regional UNDAF for 2013-2017, which has been endorsed by the 14 Governments of the Pacific Island region. It focuses on five outcomes that address the most pertinent policy priorities and aligns them well with national priorities. The regional UNDAF is accompanied by 14 country results matrices, aligned with the national priorities of each country.

29. Periodic reviews of the UNDAF with the Government serve to assess progress in achievement of target results. A great deal of collaboration takes place between the entities across all outcome areas, especially on gender and climate issues, coordinated by a lead agency. During the Board field visit, it was not always clear how the UNDAF was used as a basis for policy dialogue with the Government.

Finding 2: The United Nations is not a significant provider of financial resources in the Pacific Island region

30. The region receives significant bilateral and multilateral development cooperation, seven times the average per capita, compared to other developing countries. In some cases, the official development assistance is comparable in size to the gross national incomes of the smaller island countries.

31. The United Nations is a small player, in terms of financial resources, when compared with other development partners. A number of countries continue to rely on sustained financial support from traditional partners. Australia, for example, provides approximately $1 billion annually to the region.

32. Emerging development partners such as China are very active in the region, and South-South cooperation is increasing. China has already overtaken New Zealand as the second largest development partner in the region.

Finding 3: Very diverse United Nations representation

33. Two Resident Coordinators, in Fiji and Samoa, manage the Multi-Country Offices. The Fiji office manages 10 countries; the Samoa office, four countries (one United Nations Member State and three territories).

34. The small offices of the Resident Coordinator are challenged with supporting the United Nations coordination in 14 PSIDS. In addition, the UNDP Pacific Centre based in Fiji provides technical and advisory services to all 14 PSIDS as well as Papua New Guinea (which has its own Resident Coordinator). UNFPA has a regional office in Fiji, which covers all 14 PSIDS.

35. The two Resident Coordinators in Fiji and Samoa co-lead a joint United Nations Pacific team, whose members mostly serve the 14 PSIDS out of Fiji, while the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Environmental Programme and the World Meteorological Organization are based in Samoa.

36. Since 2008, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF (and now also together with UN-Women since 2012) have set up Joint Presence Offices in 10 countries, at the request of the respective Governments. The larger UNDP programme in Solomon Islands was upgraded to a sub-office, headed by a Deputy Resident Representative.

37. The importance of the Joint Presence Offices was underlined by the Tongan Interior Minister who came to Fiji to meet the delegation. He said that contact with the United Nations was greatly facilitated by the Joint Presence Office, which enhanced the ability of the United Nations to support the national priorities of his country.

Finding 4: High transaction costs and logistical challenges

38. The diversity of structures poses a major challenge for United Nations work in the region and leads to high transaction costs, especially when considered together with the logistical challenges. The diverse political arrangements between United Nations Member States (France, New Zealand, the United States of America and others) with various PSIDS also add complexity.

39. To this is added the emphasis placed by PSIDS Governments on the importance of balancing regional activities with country-level support. Significant disparities exist between countries and within countries. This also fuels migration, especially by young people, who leave very poor, remote (outer island) areas for urban centres or emigrate overseas.

40. The United Nations organizations adopt different strategies for different countries. The MCOs and the representatives of the United Nations organizations operating in the region cover different groups of countries. Numbers vary, from one representative for 22 countries to four or five representatives covering a single or several countries. Availability of resources drives the different approaches.

41. A total of 413 staff is employed by the 20 agencies in the region; the resource requirement for the current UNDAF cycle (2013-2017) is $292 million.

Finding 5: Efforts are being made to deal with fragmentation, though much more needs to be done

42. The delegation heard of efforts to deal with the highly fragmented arrangements, to target support in areas of comparative advantage and to provide for more coherence of the Resident Coordinator system: (a) the Joint Presence Offices; (b) joint programming and joint operations and services; (c) greater alignment with national and regional plans, such as the Pacific Plan, and with regional organizations; and (d) preparations for the conference on small island developing States.

43. The delegation was informed in Samoa that the country had requested "Delivering as one" status but the request had not yet been granted. UNDP said that there was general agreement among the United Nations team and national partners that the procedures and systems of the One United Nations initiative are tailored for a single country team and that full-scale implementation of the One United Nations model would be cumbersome and overly demanding for the small teams of United Nations organizations that cover multiple countries with few resources.

44. UNDP added that there was an understanding that the principles and ideals of the One United Nations for coordinating efforts would be used in the design and implementation of the Joint United Nations programmes in the areas of women's empowerment and youth and adolescents.

45. A senior Samoan official explained that since graduation to middle-income country status, the need for more effective aid coordination and development cooperation had become even greater. Priority areas for United Nations cooperation had been reduced considerably to become more focussed and aligned to the national plan. She emphasized the role of the United Nations, especially UNDP, to leverage more funding from other partners.

46. Some of the United Nations entities queried the need for a Resident Coordinator both in Fiji and in Samoa, and stressed the need for greater representation in the northern Pacific areas.

47. The Resident Coordinator in Fiji said that while the planned decentralization of UNDP (from New York to Bangkok) would strengthen capacity to deliver results in the Asia-Pacific region, dedicated capacities would need to be maintained and expanded in the Pacific Centre because of geographic distance as well as the specialized knowledge required to service the region.

48. UNFPA explained that it is currently undertaking a rebalancing of its presence in the region. The Resident Coordinator mentioned that the UNDP Joint Operations Centre, which services the MCO in Suva and the Pacific Centre as well as some of the United Nations organizations, is being assessed; in future, UNDP will also explore opportunities for more integrated services to increase cost-effectiveness and strengthen in-country support.

IV. Climate change and the environment

Finding 6: UNDP plays a significant role in climate change

49. UNDP is the primary agency to deliver outcome 1 of the UNDAF: by 2017, the most vulnerable communities are more resilient and enhanced capacity is developed to apply integrated approaches to environmental management, climate change adaptation/mitigation, and disaster risk management.

50. The delegation saw several examples of the significant role being played by UNDP as one of the significant global players on these issues, particularly its innovative approach in responding to the requests of communities to help them to increase capacity. Given the unique dependency on the environment for their livelihood, food security and economic development, this is essential to reduce vulnerability.

51. UNDP is using the following approaches to achieve the outcome: (a) mainstreaming a response to the issue into policies and programmes; (b) fostering partnerships and multi-stakeholder involvement; (c) strengthening knowledge and information management; (d) enhancing community resilience; and (e) strengthening humanitarian response and preparedness.

Finding 7: An integrated approach with multi-stakeholder engagement

52. Near Apia in Samoa, the delegation visited a site, managed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment, which consisted of a three dimensional model of their environment made of clay. It was made together with the local community, whose knowledge of their own local environment is extensive; yet the model managed to give the community insight into the nature of a wider ecosystem-based adaptation and community resilience, and also helped them to understand better the importance of watershed and forestry management for flood prevention and control.

53. The model has the potential to be scaled up; in fact, several examples are already available for display in other locations and can be usefully replicated in other situations. The Ministry said that it was willing to continue using it, as they are learning lessons that can contribute to policy making. They said that the key contribution of UNDP was to get the project up and running.

54. The community fully appreciated the damage that it might be causing to the wider environment. Regarding the planting of indigenous trees, they were able to reach an understanding to remove the non-native trees that were damaging the environment.

55. Enhancing livelihood recovery through food security in the aftermath of natural disasters is essential. The delegation visited a project in Nadroga Province, western Fiji, which improved the usage and protection of an environment consisting of mangroves and coral reefs alongside village areas, a zone that is used to generate a sustainable source of income. It also promotes eco-tourism and local traditional practices such as salt-making.

56. The project could be scaled up with some help in marketing and in the distribution of the salt to nearby hotels and other parts of the tourist industry; it

would also be possible for another income generating projects such as the production of honey.

57. This approach could also be seen in the Dratanagu Youth Farmers project which, in the aftermath of Cyclone Evan, which hit in December 2012, assisted the community with food production and sustainable farming ventures.

Finding 8: outstanding example of tailoring services to public need

58. An outstanding partnership between UNDP and the Samoan Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment has helped build climate services that could be replicated on other islands using data exchange collaborations. It operates under the adaptation programme, Integrating Climate Change Risk in the Agriculture and Health Sector in Samoa, financed by the Least Developed Countries Fund. The Minister said such projects would not exist without UNDP. The Ministry intends to expand its use and increase a common understanding and familiarity with climate information; SMS alerts are envisaged.

59. The project provides easy and affordable public access to climate data and information, including observational data, and offers products and services that are relevant and tailored for the public need while maintaining traditional knowledge.

Finding 9: Strong regional partnership

60. Biodiversity and ecosystem adaptation, environment monitoring, governance and waste projects are priority areas for cooperation. They will also be an important element of the SIDS conference. During its visit to Fiji and Samoa, the delegation noted the broad scope of cooperation between the United Nations organizations (including UNDP and UNFPA) and the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) agencies, including the Secretariat for the Pacific Community (SPC), the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), as well as the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP).

61. The cooperation spans over different areas, from monitoring the Millennium Development Goals to climate change. For example, SPREP and UNDP cooperate regionally on biodiversity and ecosystem adaptation, environment monitoring, governance and waste management projects. Such cooperation is encouraged, building on the different mandates, roles and the respective comparative advantage of the United Nations organizations and the CROP agencies, while avoiding competition.

62. One of the key regional partners of UNDP is SPREP. As an intergovernmental regional organization, SPREP is central to the implementation of regional environmental programmes; in turn, it values UNDP highly for its complementary global presence. With its wide regional presence and through its feedback mechanisms and annual reporting, SPREP is well placed to monitor and evaluate implementation. SPREP uses national systems for delivery, supported by its office located in the region.

63. The Prime Minister of Samoa and the Minister for Natural Resources and Environment confirmed that UNDP is an outstanding partner, providing linkages to the outside world. Its presence and easy availability, they said, have made it an indispensable partner, especially in developing the National Plan for Environment.

V. Gender equality, especially ending gender-based violence

Finding 10: Slow progress but increasing political momentum

64. Gender equality is a dedicated outcome in the UNDAF for the first time. Gender equality will also be mainstreamed across all the outcome areas. This is because of the need to make a real change in the existing inequality between men and women in Pacific societies.

65. Three sets of issues are addressed in the UNDAF: (a) women's political and economic participation; (b) sexual violence; and (c) gender-based violence.

66. During the visit, the Prime Minister of Fiji delivered a strong statement underlining the commitment of his Government to end violence against women; this was further emphasized by the Ministers for Women and for Health in Fiji and Samoa, with whom the delegation also met.

67. At meeting in Suva Cathedral, Fiji, the leaders from all the major religious faiths declared unambiguously there was no religious or cultural basis to commit acts of violence against women.

Finding 11: A holistic approach with joint programming

68. Reducing violence and responding to abuse against women, children and other vulnerable groups requires an integrated and holistic approach across a wide range of areas: social welfare; health; justice and legal systems; and education. Policy advice and legislative reform should aim at addressing the social norms and attitudes that condone the abuse of women and children

69. The sustainable delivery of protection programmes and social services for children and families that are culturally appropriate requires close cooperation with Governments and civil society partners.

70. Several entities in the United Nations country team have joined together to address this issue. The UNDAF specifies three outputs (out of nine for the gender area) that deal with legislation, training in service delivery and advocacy; the United Nations entities are expected to focus on these outputs, in cooperation with regional organizations and civil society.

71. The joint programmes in Kiribati and Solomon Islands include partnerships between the respective Governments and UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization and UN-Women; in these joint programmes, resources are combined and coordination is increased. Early results in Kiribati have led to the introduction of new legislation and the establishment of the SafeNet referral system providing support services to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. The Government had adopted a 10-year policy and action plan in 2011.

72. UNFPA and UN-Women are members of the Gender Surge Capacity Roster of the United Nations Gender Group, which supports the Pacific Humanitarian Team in coordinating a gender-sensitive response to emergencies; evidence shows that violence against women rises during natural disasters.

73. Several entities also support international observance days and the United Nations Secretary-General's campaign, UNiTE to End Violence against Women.

74. The UNFPA multi-country programme document notes that there is limited access to justice and related services for women and that the unequal power relations and patriarchal governance systems in many communities affect the societal attitudes towards women's empowerment. These challenges in programme implementation are compounded by a limited government capacity, the lack of measurable commitments and the existence of dual legal systems based on codified customary laws.

75. One of the four outputs aims to strengthen national capacity of health care providers to address gender-based violence through the provision of high-quality services, including in humanitarian response. So far, $6 million in resources have been allocated; the Ministries of Health, Women, Planning and Social Affairs, the Secretariat for the Pacific Community and United Nations organizations are designated as partners.

76. The outcome is defined as the proportion of countries that have operationalized multisectoral plans to eliminate gender-based violence. The delegation was informed that this includes conducting national prevalence surveys and using the results to develop such plans as well as health and protection-related initiatives. Currently, eight countries are targeted; the indicators mentioned include developing policy and service guidelines and providing training.

77. The country programme document for Samoa mentions addressing violence against women in output 4, under supporting the development of a population policy (along with four other areas). The UNDP Transformational Leadership for Development Programme has been fully integrated into the work plan of the Samoan Ministry of Women, and has led to the establishment of 15 civil society "breakthrough initiative groups", which are active in confronting violence against women.

78. The partnership of the Fiji country programme with the Ministry of Health on output 2, together with nine other partners, seeks to strengthen the national capacity of health care providers to address gender-based violence through the provision of high-quality services, including in humanitarian settings. So far, 20 health staff have been trained in health response to gender-based violence. The Ministry of Women, under its outreach programme to rural communities, has been collaborating with traditional and community leaders in ongoing efforts to engage communities as part of its Zero Tolerance Violence Free Community initiative.

79. The Fiji Minister for Women has impressively mobilized women and very successfully certified approximately 50 communities as 'violence free villages'. The Board visited two of these villages and was greatly encouraged by the great progress plainly visible there.

80. The delegation witnessed several examples of effective outreach by UNFPA, UNDP and other entities with local communities in Fiji: (a) in Naduru, a women's extension centre was recently opened; (b) in Rakiraki and also in Ba, market vendors are provided with accommodation as well as information about various services; (c) in Veiseisei and in Volivoli, clinics provide excellent examples of community outreach.

Finding 12 Financial inclusion empowers families

81. The delegation was briefed on the Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme, a joint programme of UNDP and the United Nations Capital Development Fund that is supported by the Australian Government and the European Union. The programme provides sustainable financial services and improves financial competence to low-income households, helping to increase access to remittances and loans and empowering families to save, invest and build a financial future for themselves.

82. Some of the results of the programme are quite striking. More than 500,000 previously unbanked Pacific Islanders have gained access to financial services. In 2013, about 200,000 students in Fiji received financial education, something that has been recognized regionally and incorporated into the education curriculum. Some 350,000 mobile phone owners are now using their phones as mobile money wallets.

Finding 13: Variance between global and regional data on the Millennium Development Goals

83. The delegation learned, in a briefing presented by the director of the Statistics for Development Division of the Secretariat for the Pacific Community, that the data for the region contained in the annual tracking reports on the Millennium Development Goals prepared by the United Nations Statistical Division do not utilize the existing data for all Pacific Island countries collected by the Secretariat for the Pacific Community.

84. The data of the Secretariat for the Pacific Community are considered more reliable by several United Nations entities, including UNICEF and WHO. On several occasions the Permanent Representatives of the PSIDS in New York have requested that a serious effort be made to address conclusively this worrying aspect of such a fundamental issue. UNDP and UNFPA have both offered to support these requests and any further efforts to resolve this issue.

Finding 14: Governance is a UNDP strength

85. In discussions with donor partners and the Governments of the Pacific Island countries and territories, the delegation learned that UNDP is seen as an important partner in providing high-quality and "neutral" technical assistance for conflict prevention and governance strengthening. UNDP is providing technical support for elections in Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Tonga, and has an extensive programme of strengthening parliaments (benefiting over 400 members of parliament), including on boosting female participation, across the region. UNDP, in partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, supports a regional anti-corruption programme centred on implementing the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

86. The Interior Minister of Tonga spoke of a successful UNDP-supported programme, led by the Speaker of the Tongan Parliament, aimed at preventing violence among young unemployed males, which is supported as part of a broader UNDP-supported regional programme, endorsed by Pacific leaders in 2012, on strengthening human security and building capacities for peace.

VI. Observations

General

87. The delegation commends the high level of dedication, commitment and hard work of all the staff it met. It noted the innovation shown to support the efforts of Governments, local authorities and communities. The positive comments heard by the delegation from all interlocutors, from heads of Government to local communities, underline that the work of UNDP and UNFPA is highly appreciated and considered very relevant to development efforts.

88. In view of the upcoming SIDS conference in Samoa, the delegation recommends that UNDP and UNFPA take full advantage of the request by the Government of Samoa that the United Nations focus on developing partnerships in the areas of gender and youth. The delegation believes the SIDS conference presents a unique opportunity, not only to focus on the potential for partnerships, but also to raise the visibility of the unique development challenges for the region and to highlight the gravity of the continuing risks and threats.

89. The delegation appreciated that the work of the United Nations entities is closely aligned with the UNDAF and with major regional plans and strategies for the Pacific, and would encourage even closer alignment. The delegation believes that the priority should remain on strengthening national development capacities, on support community resilience and mechanisms for coping with the adverse effects of climate change and natural disasters, and on eliminating violence against women and girls.

United Nations presence needs to be rationalized; stronger coordination is essential

90. Notwithstanding impressive and innovative efforts in increasing cohesion and synergy among the United Nations entities, considerable challenges remain: (a) ensuring that countries across the region are fully supported in a fair and effective way; making sure the considerable comparative advantages of the United Nations are fully brought to bear; and (c) safeguarding that the relatively modest resources are used well with a carefully targeted strategy.

91. National Governments, and some donors, have clearly expressed the wish that priorities for support be identified and addressed at country level rather than at a regional level; this certainly poses a challenge to the United Nations entities in their efforts to deliver in-country services within existing resources, especially in the smaller island States.

92. There is a strong case to be made for allocating more resources for United Nations coordination in a multi-country context, as well as for an increased United Nations presence at country level, particularly in the northern Pacific.

93. The delegation firmly believes that UNDP, as manager of the Resident Coordinator system, needs to examine the situation closely and to take action, sooner rather than later, to address the currently fragmented arrangement, as it poses serious challenges to efficient and effective coordination.

Delivering as One; Joint Presence Offices

94. The delegation strongly believes that a "Delivering as one" approach or an efficient and effective delivery system suitable for the specific situation of the Pacific Islands region should be designed and implemented. Further attention should be given to the question of "Delivering as one" for the UNDP Multi-Country Office in Samoa, within the context of a fair and effective United Nations representation in the region. In order to make the best of scarce resources, every effort should be made to avoid having Governments assume the high internal United Nations transaction costs of doing business.

95. The joint programming modality should be expanded, especially for joint programmes with other United Nations entities, with bigger budgets and multiple partners. Follow-up action should be taken, to apply the lessons learned from completed programmes.

96. More effort should be taken to ensure that the Joint Presence Office is fully supported by all partner organizations that make use of its services and to seek further equitable participation by them. Capacity building to enhance further the sustainability of the Joint Presence Office should also be examined closely.

97. More innovation is required to deal with a development environment in which the need for efficiency and better organization is noticeable. Possible application of lessons learned from other examples, such as Cape Verde as a "Delivering as one" pilot country and the Joint Service Centre in Brazil, should be examined.

98. Full advantage could be taken of offers by Governments to support and reinforce the in-country presence of the United Nations, possibly through in-kind contributions for office premises for United Nations Joint Presence Offices.

99. Increased efforts at close coordination and collaboration with regional players such as Secretariat for the Pacific Community and SPREP are essential to strengthen coherence and to avoid duplication or possible competition for resources, particularly in supporting the climate change cluster.

Climate change

100. The Pacific Islands region is situated on the front lines of climate change. Therefore, the delegation considers this to be a real strength of UNDP and that it is leveraging well its comparative advantage. UNDP could be assisted further in its work if the thresholds for project management costs, cost recovery for Global Environment Facility projects and management fees could be reviewed, taking account the particular challenges and high operating costs in the region, including monitoring, and to simplify further the formulation, implementation and evaluation of projects.

101. UNDP has a critical role to play in resilience and disaster response and recovery. Frequently, the humanitarian response to disasters and an investment in immediate recovery have to be provided while there are no resources dedicated to this area. Consequently, the UNDP offices have to assign existing human resources to disaster response, thereby affecting regular programme delivery. At the very least, UNDP should provide for a recovery advisor.

102. Innovations closely observed by the delegation in Fiji and Samoa — the three dimensional clay model and the climate database, the inclusion of community

organizations and the incorporation of traditional methods, as well as the participation of women and the inclusion of a gender perspective — may well be worth consideration in other countries in the region and, indeed, other regions.

Gender-based violence

103. Progress has been notable on advancing gender equality and women's empowerment but there is still a long way to go. The mandate for leaders in the Pacific Islands region to dramatically increase efforts on this issue has never been as clear and urgent.

104. However, the availability of data on gender equality and gender-based violence, as well as the development of specific legislation and policies in response to it, is increasing steadily.

105. The United Nations entities need to follow up on this momentum and welcome indications of change from political and also religious leaders; this could be done by providing various kinds of support: (a) implementation of commitments; (b) delivery of adequate basic services to women who experience violence; and (c) implementation of strategies to prevent gender-based violence, along with more holistic and integrated approaches.

106. Such an approach needs to be integrated into the ongoing development efforts; the various United Nations entities have different mandates but complementary contributions to make and, therefore, need to combine resources and increase communication and coordination. This will allow each United Nations organization to build on the work of the others and reinforce key messages while decreasing the risk of project duplication.

107. The delegation believes that there exists great potential to make this kind of integrated effort a strength of the United Nations in the region and that the lead role of UN-Women is already providing a much needed impetus to United Nations coherence.

108. UNFPA has much to contribute; its country programmes clearly articulate a dedicated output on ending violence against women. UNFPA is encouraged to build on its excellent outreach with local communities to address the social and cultural norms that have a serious impact on registration and reporting and to provide data and evidence in support of policies, services, guidelines and budgetary commitments.

109. Further, the delegation also believes that UNFPA can support better a comprehensive package of empowerment for women and girls in rural and remote areas through a team of well trained and committed team of clinicians and educators in sexual and reproductive health.

110. Such an outreach programme would not only deliver services but also train a future generation of service providers, thus ensuring sustainability. The programme should be linked to a practical monitoring and evaluation system sufficiently flexible to embrace local cultural sensitivities while providing data on its effectiveness. Community health workers can be effective advocates. The training of doctors and nurses in sexual and reproductive health should be given priority in their curricula.

Other issues

111. The delegation is very concerned at the discrepancy between the data used in global reports, such as the tracking reports on the Millennium Development Goals prepared by the United Nations Statistical Division, and the data collected by the Secretariat for the Pacific Community. In view of the fundamental nature of this issue and its relevance to important policy developments and development efforts, the delegation considers that it should be resolved quickly and with great urgency. UNDP and UNFPA offered to provide support at their New York headquarters to help resolve this issue.

112. The delegation feels that the success of the Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme, jointly managed by UNDP and the United Nations Capital Development Fund, has a good potential to be scaled up in other Pacific Island countries and replicated in other regions.

113. The concern, voiced by the representative of the Fijian government ministries, that funds allocated by United Nations entities are not being spent on programmes, should be examined further; however, it is worth noting that the Resident Coordinator did provide a useful basis for a reply to this issue in the meeting with the delegation during the field visit.

114. The delegation recommends a series of follow-up actions to this report, such as meeting with the United Nations Secretary-General, the UNDP Administrator and the UNFPA Executive Director, particularly in view of the upcoming SIDS Conference.

115. A strategic review of Executive Board field visits is overdue, especially with a view to updating the guidelines for field visits, which remain unchanged since they were established in 1994. This review should be completed by the 2014 second regular session, so that necessary changes could be implemented before the end of this year.

ANNEX

List of participants in the field visit by members of the Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to Fiji and Samoa, 22 to 29 April 2014

Country	Name and title
ASIAN AND THE PACIFIC	
Fiji	H.E. Mr. Peter Thomson Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative, and President, UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board
Nepal	Ms. Sewa Lamsal Adhikari Minister Plenipotentiary Deputy Permanent Representative
AFRICA	
United Republic of Tanzania	H.E. Mr.Tuvako Nathaniel Manongi Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative, and Vice-President, UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board
Ethiopia	H.E Mr. Aman Hassen Bame Ambassador Deputy Permanent Representative
EASTERN EUROPE	
Moatenegro	H.E. Mr. Milorad Scepanovic Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative
Russian Federation	Mr. Sergey Vasiliev First Secretary and Head of Economic Section
LATIN AMERICAN AND THE CARIBBEAN	
Guatemala	Maria Jose Del Aguila Castillo First Secretary
WESTERN EUROPE AND OTHER STATES	
Ireland	Mr. Vincent Herlihy First Secretary and Vice-President, UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board
Australia	Mr. Peter Versegi Minister Counsellor (Development)

SECRETARIAT

UNDP	Ms. Rekha Thapa Secretary, UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board
UNFPA	Dr. Josephine Ojiambo Chief, External Relations and Executive Board Branch